No. 2

TWO DISCOURSES

ON

INFANT BAPTISM,

BY

REV. GEORGE D. ARMSTRONG,

PASTOR OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, NORFOLK, VA.

I. THE SCRIPTURE-WARRANT FOR INFANT BAPTISM.
II. THE NATURE OF INFANT BAPTISM.

(PUBLISHED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE NORFOLK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.)

NEW YORK:
M. W. DODD, PUBLISHER AND BOOKSELLER,
BRICK CHURCH CHAPEL, OPPOSITE CITY HALL.

1852.

R. Craighead, Printer and Stereotyper, 53 Vesey street, N. Y.

TWO DISCOURSES

ON

INFANT BAPTISM,

BY

REV. GEORGE D. ARMSTRONG,

PASTOR OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, NORFOLK, VA.

I. THE SCRIPTURE-WARRANT FOR INFANT BAPTISM.
II. THE NATURE OF INFANT BAPTISM.

(PUBLISHED BY THE MEMBERS OF THE NORFOLK PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.)

NEW YORK:
M. W. DODD, PUBLISHER AND BOOKSELLER,
BRICK CHURCH CHAPEL, OPPOSITE CITY HALL.

1852.

R. Craighead, Printer and Stereotyper,
53 Vesey street, N. Y.

INTRODUCTORY NOTICE.

These Discourses, originally preached by the Author in the ordinary course of his ministry, and for the instruction of the people of his charge, having been asked for publication, are now given for that purpose, with the prayer that a covenant-keeping God may bless them to the establishment in "the faith of Abraham" of those for whose benefit they were preached, and to awakening within them a more grateful remembrance and prayerful acknowledgment of covenant privileges and obligations.

THE

SCRIPTURE-WARRANT

FOR

INFANT BAPTISM.

"For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; else were your children unclean, but now are they holy."—1 CORINTHIANS vii. 14.

THE law of Moses expressly prohibited the intermarriage of the Jews with the heathen Canaanites. This law is on record in Deut. vii. 2–4. "And when the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee, thou shalt smite them and utterly destroy them, thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them; neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods." Under this law Ezra required the Jew, who had married a wife from among the Canaanites, not only to put away his wife, but accounted the children illegitimate, and required them to be sent away with their heathen mother. (See Ezra x. 3.) Such a law as this was in perfect keeping with the spirit of the Mosaic economy; the great object of which was to keep the Israelites apart, a separate nation in the earth, until the coming of Christ.

From the Acts and apostolic epistles, we learn that most of the differences about doctrine which harassed the church in the days of the Apostles, originated in the over-zealous and often mistaken attachment of the converted Jews to the law of Moses. With these facts in mind, it will be no matter of surprise to us, that in the church at Corinth—a Christian church, in the midst of a heathen city, and embracing among its members many converted Jews (see Acts xviii. 1–17)—the difficulty which Paul is resolving in the text and context should have arisen. That difficulty was about the continuance of the marriage connexion between a believing husband or wife and an unbelieving partner.

This difficulty Paul resolves in the two verses immediately preceding the text—"If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman that hath a husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him." Then follows the text, in which Paul gives, 1st, A reason for this decision of his—"For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband;" and 2d, A statement of a fact, which, upon admitted Jewish principles, proved his reason for his decision to be a valid one—"else were your children unclean, but now are they holy."

The words "*sanctify, unclean, holy,*" although often used by the sacred writers with reference to moral character, cannot be so understood in the text; for the reason, that the text would then assert as true that which the Scriptures throughout, and no part of them more decidedly than the writings of Paul, treat as untrue: and also because the text would then assume as untrue, the very facts out of which the difficulty had arisen; would decide the difficulty by assuming that there was no difficulty to be decided. Much the most common use of these terms, especially in Old Testament Scriptures, is with reference to what is termed "ceremonial purity and impurity." Under the ceremonial law, a person "*unholy* or *unclean*" was shut out from the congregation, and all religious association with the people. Hence such expressions as "He shall be unclean until the evening"—"He shall be unclean seven days." This idea of exclusion from the society of God's people, would appear to have

become the principal idea attached to the word "*unclean*," in the days of the Apostles, if we may judge from its use by Peter in Acts x. 28. "And Peter said unto them"—i. e. Cornelius and those assembled in his house—"ye know how it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company with, or come unto one of another nation, but God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or *unclean*."

If we understand the terms "*sanctify, unclean, holy*," as referring to ceremonial purity and impurity, we may venture, bearing in mind the way in which the difficulty had originated, to paraphrase the whole passage thus:

The doctrine of your Jewish members, concerning which ye have written me (see v. 1), that the believing husband or wife must separate from an unbelieving partner, in order to membership in the church, is not in accordance with the principles upon which that church has been established. The law of Moses, which has given rise to this difficulty, both by the terms of the law, and the decision of Ezra, includes the child with the heathen parent in the same condemnation; so that the condition of the one may be inferred from the condition of the other. Now the undisputed practice of the church, a practice admitted by you all, is, to treat the children of such marriages as those in question, as not "unclean" but "holy." Upon Jewish principles then, it is evident from this fact, that the unbelieving husband or wife is, by the church of God, accounted sanctified by (or in, or for the sake of) the believing partner.

Thus the argument of Paul in support of his decision, is made to depend upon the evident "holiness" of the children of such a marriage; a "holiness" unquestioned by their Jewish members, and evident alike to all. How was this "holiness" thus rendered evident? But one way has ever been known in which the church of God has publicly signified that a child was not "unclean," but "holy"—and that way is by applying to the child the "seal" of God's covenant—and this, we doubt not, was the way in which the fact was rendered evident in the church at Corinth in the days of the Apostles.

According to this interpretation of the text, it teaches our doctrine of infant baptism, or that the "seal of the covenant" is to be applied to a child where one of the parents is a believer (and of course, where both parents are), not directly, in declar-

ing the child "holy," but by unavoidable implication, the "holiness" of the child being rendered evident by its baptism. This interpretation, then, does not involve the idea of the baptism of the unbelieving husband or wife for the sake of the believing partner, in teaching the baptism of the child for the sake of the believing parent: so far from it, it treats the "sanctification" (which term we understand in the sense in which Peter used it in Acts x. 28) as a sanctification not rendered evident directly by any sign, and in the difficulty proposed to Paul, the very matter in question, but to be inferred from the evident holiness of the child.

This interpretation of the text appears to be the true one for three reasons; viz:—1st, It assigns to the principal words in the text, "sanctify, unclean, holy," the sense in which they are most commonly used by the sacred writers. 2d, It gives to the whole text a meaning which is not only pertinent to the position which it occupies in Paul's solution of the difficulty proposed him, but it makes the text a decisive argument in support of that solution. 3d, It makes the text an eminently Pauline argument, a solution of a Jewish difficulty upon admitted Jewish principles.

It has been selected as the text for the present discourse, in which I purpose presenting *the Scripture-warrant for infant baptism*, principally because it presents the subject with historic accuracy; as an institution which, in the time of the Apostles, was not then first to be established, but one, the divine authority for which no one in that day had presumed to question.

That we may rightly appreciate the scripture-warrant for infant baptism, it is necessary that we carefully examine: 1st, the nature of the change effected in the constitution of the visible church, in the days of Christ and his apostles; and 2d, the nature of circumcision.

First, *Is the church of God now the same church which existed in the days of Abraham and the prophets, simply modified, to adapt it to the new order of things existing under the Christian dispensation? Or was the church existing before the birth of Christ destroyed by him, and a new church constituted in its stead?*

"The church," "the church of God," and "the church of the

living God," are phrases of frequent occurrence in the scriptures, and in most instances are used in the sense of the "visible" as contra-distinguished from the "invisible or spiritual" church. Respecting the invisible or spiritual church there can be no question; it has been one and the same in every age. The only question is respecting the visible church. By "the church," as I shall use the term, and as I think the sacred writers always used it, when they used it in the sense of the visible church, I understand that visible society which God has made the depository of his truth, and in which he has instituted his ordinances. While many would contend that "the church" means much more than this, all will admit that it means thus much; and as in this discourse the correctness of the conclusions will depend, not upon what is excluded by the definition, but upon what is included, no objection can be urged upon the ground of the definition, the correctness of which all admit, so far as it goes.

Great events, great to the church of God, took place in the days of Christ and his apostles. In what light do the Scriptures present these events to us? I will ask your attention to three passages of scripture, one from the Old and two from the New Testament, selected from among many which might be adduced, because they are passages in which, by consent of all orthodox commentators, the events in question are the subject matter of the inspired communication.

Isaiah liv. 1–5: "Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child; for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord. Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thy habitation; spare not, lengthen thy cords and strengthen thy stakes; for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left, and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited." By the "desolate," and "married wife," Isaiah here aptly designates the Gentile and the Jew. He then, speaking in the person of Jehovah, addresses the church. And what says he? Take down the old tent or tabernacle to make way for a new and better one which Messiah will erect at his coming? Such would be the language best calculated to convey the idea of the destruction

of the Old Testament church and the substitution of a new church in its stead. The prophet uses no such language as this. Addressing the church of God then in existence, his words are—"Enlarge the place of *thy* tent and let them stretch forth the curtains of *thy* habitation; spare not, lengthen *thy* cords and strengthen *thy* stakes, for *thou* shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left, and *thy* seed shall inherit the Gentiles and make the desolate cities to be inhabited." The prophet proceeds—"Fear not, for thou shalt not be ashamed; neither be thou confounded, for thou shalt not be put to shame; for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth, and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more; for thy maker is thy husband; the Lord of Hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall he be called." Addressing the church as the spouse of Christ, a figure frequently used by the sacred writers, he assures her, that although the abrogation of the old economy might seem to her like the repudiation of a wife, it would, in fact, prove itself to be a renewal of the conjugal relation, and her momentary rejection would be followed by an everlasting reconciliation; in her wondrous prosperity under the new dispensation, her trials under the old would seem to her but as the "shame of her youth" or "the reproach of her widowhood," no longer worthy of remembrance.

Thus was the introduction of the Christian dispensation spoken of by an inspired prophet, before it occurred:—Let us now see how an inspired apostle speaks of it after it has taken place.

Romans xi. 18–24: Addressing the Gentiles, Paul writes—"Boast not against the branches; but if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then; the branches were broken off that I might be graffed in. Well, because of unbelief, they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not high-minded, but fear. For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God; on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off. And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be graffed in, for God is able to graff them in again. For if thou wert cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature,

and wert graffed, contrary to nature, into a good olive tree, how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be graffed into their own olive tree?" In this passage, by the "wild" and "good olive trees," the apostle cannot mean the natural state of the parties referred to, before God, for he has proved, in a previous part of the epistle, that, in this respect, between the Gentile and the Jew there is no difference. Neither can he mean by the "good olive tree," the politico-ecclesiastical state established in the time of Moses; for that, with the ceremonial law which was characteristic of it, was then "vanishing away," and none more zealously than Paul resisted every attempt made by Judaizing teachers, to lay this "yoke" upon the Gentiles. He can mean nothing but the visible church. And what says he of it?—"That the good olive tree was cut down, or rooted up? That it had withered trunk and branch, or was no longer the care of the divine planter? Nothing like it! He asserts the continuance of the good olive tree in life and vigor; the excision of some worthless branches, and the insertion of new ones in their stead. 'Thou,' says he, addressing the Gentile, 'partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree.' Translate this into less figurative language, and what is its import? That the visible church of God subsists without injury through the change of dispensation and of members. Branches indeed may be cut off, but the rooted trunk stands firm, and other branches occupy the places of those which are lopped away. The Jews are cast out of the church, but the church perishes not with them. There was still left the trunk of the old olive tree; there was still fatness in its roots; it stands in the same fertile soil, the covenant of God: and the admission of the Gentiles into the room of the excommunicated Jews makes them a part of that covenant church; as branches graffed into the olive tree and flourishing in its fatness, are identified with the tree." (J. M. Mason.) But this is not all. The apostle, in the light of the prophecies, foresaw the restoration of the Jews. These, says he, "the natural branches, shall be graffed in *again*, shall be graffed into their own olive tree"—then their own olive tree must have been preserved. Dropping the figure, they shall be brought into the same church in which the Gentile Christians now are: and this is their own church; in coming into it, they are but coming back again into

their own church. How can this be, unless the visible church be one and the same under both dispensations?

Ephesians ii. 11–14: "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called the uncircumcision by that which is called the circumcision in the flesh, made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who were some time afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us." Can there be any doubt what "commonwealth of Israel" it is, in which the Gentiles, once "aliens," are now made citizens? Can it be any other than the visible church to which Israel belonged? Or what "covenants of promise" to which they, "once strangers," have been "brought nigh?" Can it be any other than the "covenants of promise" upon which God's church was built from the first? Or in what the Gentile and the Jew have now been made "both one," by "breaking down the middle wall of partition between them?" Can it be anything else than the "church of the living God?"

The apostle proceeds (Vs. 19–22): "Now therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." Fellow-citizens with what saints? The Old-Testament saints beyond a question, fellow-citizens with Abraham, Moses, David, and Isaiah. Of what household of God does the apostle here speak? Of the household to which those Old-Testament saints belonged. "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone. In whom all the building fitly framed together, groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord." Of what holy temple does the apostle speak? Of the church spiritual? No—for of the church spiritual he declares, "Other foundation can no man lay than is laid, which is Christ Jesus" (1 Cor. iii. 11). 'Tis only the visible church which can be said to be built "upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone." And it is only the one visible Church, which has existed under both the New and the Old Testament

dispensations, that can be said to embrace in its foundations, at once, the apostles and prophets.

These passages are illustrations of the way in which the Scriptures speak of that change which took place in immediate connexion with the coming of Christ; and I might greatly multiply such quotations, did time permit, or did the occasion require it. But in view of these, I ask, is the opinion an uncharitable one, that but for the necessity of making the teachings of scripture conform to a preconceived theory, the idea that the Old Testament church had been destroyed by Christ, and a new church constituted in its stead, would no more have entered the mind of Christian man, than the idea that the old gospel through which Abel was saved, had been recalled at the same time by Christ, and a new gospel given in its stead?

SECOND, *Was circumcision a peculiar Jewish institution, and as such to pass away with the Mosaic economy? Or was it given to the church of God as a seal of God's covenant with that church, and, therefore, to remain, in substance, until that covenant has been fulfilled?*

Circumcision was given as the seal of God's covenant with Abraham, which covenant is on record in Gen. xvii. 4–8. "As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram; but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee; and kings shall come out of thee. And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant; to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God."

A careful examination of this covenant will show you that it embraces three several particulars, viz.:

A promise of the land of Canaan to Abraham in his natural descendants—"I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession," and peculiar religious privileges

implied in the words—"and I will be their God." In this particular of the covenant, Israel alone is interested; and in fulfilment of its obligations on the part of God, they became his peculiar people, and received peculiar blessings from the days of Abraham to the time of their rejection and the call of the Gentiles. The Mosaic economy was among these peculiar blessings; and circumcision, as the seal of this part of the covenant, was a peculiar Jewish institution. The Jews, in the days of Christ's sojourn on earth, in their blind attachment to the mere ritual of the church and to the law of Moses, seem to have supposed that circumcision was the seal of this part of the covenant alone (and this error forms a homogeneous part of the faith of the Scribes and Pharisees). Their mistake our Lord corrects in his words recorded in John vii. 22: "Moses, therefore, gave unto you circumcision (not that circumcision is of Moses, but of the fathers, i. e. the patriarchs)."

Circumcision, as the seal of the covenant with Abraham, is the seal of the whole covenant; God's assurance of its fulfilment in all its parts. Besides the particular already referred to, in which the Jews alone are interested, that covenant embraces two other particulars. One in the words, "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant; to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee." Another, in the words, "And thou shalt be a father of many nations,"—"for a father of many nations I have made thee."

In what sense are we to understand these terms of the promise? Let us answer this question by a direct appeal to the Scriptures. Gal. iii. 29: "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise." Rom. ix. 6–8: "For they are not all Israel which are of Israel. Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but in Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed." Rom. iv. 13–17: "For the promise that he should be the heir of the world (a phrase which Paul here uses as equivalent with 'the father of many nations,' as is evident from v. 17), was not to Abraham or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if they which are of the law be

heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect. Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is there is no transgression. Therefore it is of faith that it might be of grace, to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed: not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all (as it is written, I have made thee the father of many nations), before him whom he believed, even God who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not, as though they were."

With these explicit declarations of Scripture before us, can we hesitate to interpret these terms of God's covenant with Abraham, not of his natural seed and the Jewish national establishment, but of those who become his seed through participation in the faith of Abraham, and of the church of God? Can we doubt that the believing Gentile has become an heir of this promise, in virtue of his union with Christ, "the seed of Abraham?" Can we doubt that we Gentiles have been brought into the church of God in fulfilment of God's covenant with Abraham, expressed in the words—"for a father of many nations have I made thee." The covenant with Abraham, of which circumcision was given as the seal, is a covenant in which we, as individual Christians, and as a church, have a personal interest. The promises of that covenant are this day in process of fulfilment. Who then, without express authority from God, shall venture to tear away the seal from that covenant?

What Paul calls the mere "sign" has, we believe, been changed, in substituting baptism for circumcision. But the covenant, and the seal of the covenant, remain the same: for baptism and circumcision are as truly one and the same, in our view, as the gospel which we believe is one and the same with that which Abraham believed.

Most of the difficulty experienced by the ingenuous inquirer, in admitting that such a substitution, as that for which we contend, has taken place by divine authority—a substitution of the sign of baptism for that of circumcision—arises out of a very mistaken notion respecting the manner in which the change that accompanied the introduction of the Christian dispensation was effected. That change was effected, not suddenly, but very gradually. The Jews, even when truly converted, were so strongly attached to their peculiar institutions, that it was with

difficulty they could be induced to give them up, even when better ones were offered them in their stead. This the Lord Jesus assigns as his reason for making the change so gradually as he did, in his words addressed to his disciples—"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when he the Spirit of Truth is come, he will guide you into all truth," John xvi. 12, 13. The Christian dispensation began to be introduced by John, as the forerunner of Christ. The Old Testament dispensation was not brought to a final close until the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus. And thus the new dispensation may be said to have overlapped the old for a period of nearly fifty years. During this time, slight changes were made, in matters not affecting the substance of religion generally, without any distinct and formal announcement, in so far as appears from the record; the reality of the change being certified to the church by the practice of the Apostles.

In this way, the substitution of the first for the seventh day of the week as the Christian sabbath, was made. Originally instituted in commemoration of Christ's resting from his labors of creation (see John i. 3 and Heb. i. 2), when, on the first day of the week, he rested from his greater work of redemption, the first day became the Christian sabbath. The same, in substance, the sabbath has ever been; a day to be kept holy to the Lord. Our authority for saying that this change has been made by divine appointment, is the practice of inspired apostles, evidences of which appear in various parts of the New Testament.

So was it, also, even in so important a change in the constitution of the church, as that effected in the admission of females into full membership in that church. Nothing can be more certain than that they were not admitted into full membership under the Old Testament dispensation: equally certain is it, that they were admitted into full membership by the inspired apostles of the Lord Jesus; but for any distinct announcement of this change, we will search the New Testament scriptures in vain. Who was the first admitted, and when this event took place, no one can pretend to tell. Will it be thought strange then, if a change in the substitution of the sign of baptism for

that of circumcision has been made in the same unostentatious way?

"A sacrament consists of two parts, a sign and the thing signified." Of these, the thing signified is the matter of greatest importance. So the Scriptures determine in the case before us:—"For in Jesus Christ, neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love." Gal. v. 6. "The like figure whereunto, even baptism, doth also now save us (not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." 1 Pet. iii. 21. In the thing signified, no change has been effected; circumcision and baptism are one and the same: it is only in the sign that a change has been made.

The sign of circumcision had been grossly perverted by the Jews in the days of Christ and his apostles: by losing sight of its original significance in its character as a Jewish institution, and also by ascribing to it sacramental grace. This rendered such a change as that for which we contend desirable: the change made in the membership of the church rendered it necessary. We can see, too, a beautiful propriety in the selection, which the great head of the church has made, of a sign to take the place of that of circumcision. The abundant out-pouring of the Spirit; called by the Lord Jesus the "baptism with the Holy Ghost" (Acts i. 5), and a clearer revelation of the great doctrine of regeneration by the power of that Spirit, and characteristic of the new dispensation: and in the sign of baptism, in the sprinkling the body with pure water in the name of the blessed Trinity, we have this truth forthshadowed: and so would the Jew, familiar with the ceremonial purifications under the Old Testament dispensation, understand it. As the change in dispensation just spoken of was made in fulfilment of the covenant with Abraham, it was proper that it should be symbolized in the seal of that covenant.

That the sign of baptism has been substituted for that of circumcision by divine authority, we have just such evidence as the analogy of the case demands, and just such as the words of the Lord recorded in John xvi. 12, 13, authorize us to expect; and this will be evident, from a consideration of these admitted facts, viz:

1st. That by the authority of apostolic example, baptism now occupies the same place in the economy of the visible church which circumcision formerly did, in so far as adult converts from heathenism are concerned: it is a public profession of their participation in the faith of Abraham.

2d. The spiritual significance of the two, when applied to adults, is the same. With respect to circumcision, Paul asserts in Rom. iv. 11, "And he (*i. e.* Abraham) received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, yet being uncircumcised," and this is the spiritual significance of baptism, when applied to an adult, as Abraham was, by common consent of all Protestants.

3d. We have distinct traces of the administration of baptism, by the apostles, to the children of believing parents; just as circumcision was administered under the Old Testament dispensation. It is said of Lydia (Acts xvi. 14, 15), "Whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul; and when she was baptized, and *her household*, she besought us," &c. It is said of the Philippian jailor (Acts xvi. 33), "And he took them (*i. e.* Paul and Silas) and washed their stripes; and was baptized, *he and all his*, straightway." Speaking of his labors in Corinth, Paul says (1 Cor. i. 16), "And I baptized also the *household* of Stephanas; besides, I know not whether I baptized any other." And in our text, as we understand it, Paul refers to the well known practice of the Church of God, in his day, to baptize children where one of the parents was a believer; to settle a matter of controversy which had arisen out of a perverted application of the Mosaic law.

In order to a fairer appreciation of the evidence that the sign of baptism has been substituted for that of circumcision, by divine authority, let us look at the difficulties which must be met if we deny this substitution. To say nothing, at present, of the difficulties arising out of the oneness of the church of God under both dispensations, and the nature of the covenant with Abraham, of which circumcision was the appointed seal, a covenant in which, an inspired apostle being its interpreter, we Gentile Christians have as deep and as personal an interest as any Jew ever had: but to take the most favorable view

which the facts of the case will admit of, the difficulties to be met in denying this substitution appear to me insuperable.

According to the Baptist view, baptism, both in the sign and in the substance of the institution, is an ordinance peculiar to the Christian dispensation, and is to be administered to believers only, and this upon a public profession of their faith in Christ. As the sign of circumcision has ceased to exist in the Church since the days of the apostles, that church, then, is left without any visible indication that the children of believers stand in any relation to the church, or its glorious head, different from those of the "heathen-man and the publican." Under the Old Testament dispensation, it cannot be questioned that the children of believers, on the ground of the faith of their parents, were entitled to certain church privileges, and circumcision was the public sign of this their title. If we do not admit that the sign of baptism has been substituted in the place of that of circumcision, then must we assume, that at the introduction of the Christian dispensation, a change was made in the constitution of God's church, be that church the same or not the same, the practical effect of which has been to cut off the children of believers from church privileges which they had enjoyed from the days of Abraham. If such a change as this was made, I do not hesitate to affirm, that he knows but little of the strength of parental affection, who does not know, that of all the changes then made this is the one which would have been most keenly felt.

And yet, "Search the records of the New Testament from one end to the other, and you will find no trace of a remonstrance, an objection, or a difficulty on this subject, from the mouth of a believing or an unbelieving Israelite. The former never parted with a tittle of even the Mosaic law, till the will of God was so clearly demonstrated as to remove every doubt: the latter lay constantly in wait for matter of accusation against the Christians. Nothing could have prompted him to louder clamor, or to fiercer resistance, than an attempt to overturn what he regarded as a fundamental principle of the covenant with Abraham: nothing could have more startled and distressed the meek and modest disciple. Yet, according to the Baptist theory, that attempt is made; that fundamental principle of the covenant with Abraham is overturned; and not a friend com-

plains, nor a foe resents! What miracle of enchantment has so instantaneously relieved the conscience of the one, and calmed the wrath of the other? Where is that wayward vanity, that captious criticism, that combustible temperament, that insidious, implacable, restless enmity, which by night and by day, in country and in town, haunted the steps of the apostles, and treasured up actions, words, looks, for the hour of convenient vengeance? All gone; dissipated in a moment! The proud and persecuting Pharisee rages at the name of Jesus Christ; fights for his traditions and his phylacteries; and utters not a syllable of dissent from a step which completely annihilates the covenant with Abraham!—that very covenant from which he professes to derive all his importance!"—(*J. M. Mason.*) Can we believe this? And yet all this must be believed if we reject the idea of the substitution of the sign of baptism for that of circumcision, in the Church of God.

I have yet another, and an independent argument, to present in favor of our view of this matter. At the commencement of his public ministry, our Lord declares distinctly the nature of the change which he purposed to effect in the constitution of his church. His words are recorded in Matt. v. 17, 18: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you; till heaven and earth shall pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." That our Lord here uses the term "law" in that general sense, familiar to every student of Scripture, in which it embraces positive institutions, even those of the ceremonial law, no orthodox commentator has, I believe, ever questioned. Would we then know whether any change has been introduced in the economy of the Church, we can settle the matter by simply answering the question:—Does the fulfilment of the prophecies require such change? Or has any part of the Old Testament economy been done away? We can settle this by answering the question,—Has the purpose of it been fulfilled?

For example: Have the Gentiles, by divine authority, been admitted to the church? Yes. God's promise, a prophecy in substance, as contained in the covenant with Abraham, in the words, "I have made thee the father of many nations," for its fulfilment, requires their admission.

Have females, by divine authority, been admitted to full membership in the church? Yes. The prophecy of Joel, quoted by Peter and applied to the Christian dispensation, "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your *daughters* shall prophesy, and on my servants and on my *hand-maidens*, I will pour out in those days of my spirit," Joel ii. 28, 29, quoted in Acts ii. 17, 18, interpreted upon the Scripture principle laid down by Peter in Acts x. 47, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we;" this prophecy, for its fulfilment, requires their admission.

Has the ceremonial law been done away in Christ? Yes. The sacrifices which it demanded, in so far as they were typical, have been fulfilled in Christ: its "yoke" of ordinances, in so far as they were designed to keep the Jews a distinct people in the earth until the coming of Christ, have fulfilled the purpose of their institution.

Has Christ annulled the sealed covenant of God with Abraham? No. In so far as the obligations of that covenant have been fulfilled, the seal has become void: but in its most precious particulars—not those which concern the possession of an earthly Canaan by the natural seed of Abraham, but the possession of the heavenly Canaan by those who through faith have become the seed of Abraham and heirs according to the promise—that covenant will never have been fulfilled, until the last of the redeemed from among men shall have passed hence, lighted on his upward way by the flames of a burning world. Has Christ torn the seal from that covenant? No. The purpose for which that seal was given, will never have been fulfilled until the last of those interested in that covenant shall have exchanged his state of grace for a state of glory.

For all these reasons we conclude, that the Abrahamic covenant was given, not as the peculiar property of the Jew, but was given to the church; and as he who gave has never revoked it, to the church it belongs this day: and every gospel sermon preached, and every temple of the living God, and every converted soul on earth, is a witness of God's present faithfulness to his covenant obligations to his church.

THIRD, Granting that the church of God has been one and the same, under both dispensations; and that the Abrahamic covenant, of which circumcision was given as the seal, is now in process of fulfilment; and that there is sufficient scriptural authority for believing that the sign of baptism has been substituted for that of circumcision in the seal of that covenant:—*a question yet remains:—Does not the New Testament teach us that Christ has placed a limitation on the application of the seal which did not exist before his coming? In other words—Does not the New Testament prohibit the baptism of infants?*

That the New Testament contains any express prohibition of infant baptism, no one pretends. Of what nature, and where, then, is the prohibition? The answer given by those who deny the doctrine of infant baptism is, in those passages which direct us to administer baptism upon a credible profession of faith in Christ; especially in the apostolic commission on record in Mark xvi. 15, 16, "And he said unto them, go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned."

Dr. Carson, in his work on baptism, republished in this country by the Baptist Publication Society, speaking of these words of our Lord, remarks:—"I am willing to hang the whole controversy on this passage. If I had not another passage in the word of God, I would engage to refute my opponents from the words of this commission alone."—(Carson on Baptism, p. 169.) With this declaration before me, I may properly take this passage as a fair specimen of the class of passages to which it belongs, and I do so with this remark, that I agree with Dr. Carson in thinking it the passage in the New Testament which of all others most strongly favors his views: and also, that if he fails to "refute his opponents from these words," he must fail altogether, upon scriptural ground.

No one can affirm that this passage contains an express prohibition of infant baptism. What then does it contain? It contains, the Baptist will say, a prohibition of infant baptism by necessary implication: for baptism is here made consequent upon faith, "he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," and as no one pretends that infants exercise faith, therefore we

are bound to refuse them baptism. For the sake of distinctness, give this argument the form of a syllogism.

1st, "He that *believeth* and is *baptized* shall be saved." Says the Baptist—Baptism is here made consequent upon faith;

Infants cannot exercise faith;

Therefore, infants must not be baptized.

2d, The whole passage is—"He that *believeth* and is baptized shall be *saved*, he that *believeth not* shall be damned." Upon the principles of interpretation adopted above, salvation is, twice over, made consequent upon faith;

Infants cannot exercise faith;

Therefore, infants cannot be saved.

3d, This is not all. If in the words—"He that believeth and is *baptized* shall be *saved*," baptism is made consequent upon faith,

Salvation is made consequent upon baptism.

Says the Baptist, I will not baptize an infant,

Therefore, The Baptist's conduct is one cause of that infant's damnation.

I do not say, that the Baptist believes the doctrines embodied in the second and third conclusions stated above; but I do say that the logic which gives him a prohibition of infant baptism in these words of our Lord, shuts him up to these doctrines: the same course of reasoning which will make this passage bar the infant's way to the baptismal font, will make it triply bar his way to heaven, and will make the baptist, in part, responsible for the loss of the infant's soul.

In view of such conclusions as these, I say to the Baptist, there must be some fault in your logic, and the fault lies just here. You have entirely mistaken the nature of the commission given by our Lord to his Apostles, recorded in Mark xvi. 15, 16. This is not the Apostles' commission, either to preach or to baptize.

Their commission to preach they had received long before, as we learn from Mark iii. 13, 14, "And he (*i. e.* Jesus) goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would, and they came unto him, and he *ordained* twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to *preach*," together with Matt. x. 5, 7, "these twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them saying, go not in the way of the Gentiles,

and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not; but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and as ye go preach."

Their commission to baptize they must have received long before also. We read in John iv. 1, 2, "When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John (though Jesus himself baptized not, but his *disciples*);" and this record refers to events which occurred near the commencement of our Lord's public ministry. We must therefore conclude that the Apostles had received their commission to baptize at this time, or else that they had been for years administering baptism, under the very eyes of Jesus, without any commission so to do.

If this commission recorded in Mark xvi. 15, 16, is not the apostles' commission to preach nor to baptize, I will be asked what then is it? It is just what it purports to be.

Having before given his apostles their commission to preach and baptize, with the restriction that they "go not in the way of the Gentiles," and "enter no city of the Samaritan," but "go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" alone; our Lord, now that by his death he had "broken down the middle wall of partition between" the Jew and the Gentile, Eph. ii. 14, had "taken away the handwriting of ordinances which was against us (Gentiles), nailing it to his cross," Col. ii. 14, takes off the restriction laid upon them at their ordination, and commissions them to "go into *all the world* and preach his gospel to *every creature*."

Applying, now, the principle of interpretation universally admitted in courts of law as well as in interpreting the Scriptures, that every part of an article must be interpreted with an eye to the scope and object of that article, we conclude that baptism is here only incidentally mentioned by our Lord, he taking it for granted that his apostles were already fully instructed as to the proper subjects for baptism. Thus understood, this passage comes to us freed from the doctrine of infant damnation—a doctrine as much abhorred by the Baptist as it is by us; but, at the same time, it comes stripped of every shadow of a prohibition of infant baptism.

We have referred to the fact, that the apostles had their commission to baptize long before the words recorded in Mark xvi. 15, 16, were addressed to them. Where and when did they receive that commission? Here is the Gordian knot of the

Baptist theory. To us the matter is of easy explanation. When Christ ordained them as ministers of his church, according to the unvarying law of that church, authority to baptize was given with the authority to preach; and any special instructions respecting baptism were not needed by them, since the seal of the covenant was to be applied by them, just as it had always been applied from the days of Abraham. According to our view, no proper commission to baptize was ever given to the apostles, or has ever been given to any one since their day, excepting under the authority of the covenant with Abraham.

Does any one demand of me that I show him the origin of infant baptism in the church of God, under the New Testament dispensation. I reply to this demand just as I would to the demand of one, who, seeing the broad expanse of our noble James River, where its waters mingle with those of the ocean, should demand of me that I show him the fountain-head of that river in Eastern Virginia, the territory in which the body of that river lies. I would take such an one to the mountain range which divides Eastern from Western Virginia, and pointing him to the river, as there, a bold, broad stream, it rolls its flood of waters between rocky cliffs on either side; I would say to him, "See you not that the fountain-head must be further westward?" And then taking him far away towards the setting sun, I would show him a fountain gushing forth in a green mountain gorge, its crystal waters sparkling in the sunbeam, and I would say, "See, here it is." I would show him the fountain head of the river where God placed it. So with the demand respecting the origin of infant baptism. I take the questioner back to the days of Christ and his Apostles, and show him this practice, then covering the whole surface of the church of God, and say to him, "See you not that its origin cannot be here?" And then taking him back with me to the days of Abraham, I would show him the fountain-head of infant baptism where God placed it.

Does any one ask of me my commission to administer baptism to the children of believing parents? I turn to Gen. xvii. 9, 10: "And *God said* unto Abraham, thou shalt keep my covenant, therefore, thou and thy seed after thee in their generations. This is my covenant which ye shall keep between me and you, and thy seed after thee. Every man-child among you shall be

circumcised." "And *God said.*" My commission bears the signature of Jehovah. And lest any one should question its validity under the Christian dispensation, behold! the Lord Jesus, the One head of the church, has countersigned it. "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil," Matt. v. 17.

NATURE

OF

INFANT BAPTISM.

"And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant; to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee."—GENESIS xvii. 7.

IN our examination of the Scripture warrant for infant baptism, we have seen that baptism under the New Testament dispensation, and circumcision under the Old, whilst they differ in form, are in substance the same, their substantial oneness consisting in this: that they are alike the seal of that covenant into which God entered with Abraham, on behalf of himself and his seed after him.

A seal, among men, is a mark attached to any written article, to authenticate it as the writing of him whose seal it bears. Should the writing be an order, it carries along with it all the force of his authority who sealed it. Should it be an engagement of any sort, it fastens upon him the obligation to discharge that engagement. Should the seal mark the concurrence of two parties to a matter, and this is the case where a seal is attached to a covenant, it then binds equally both parties to the discharge of the obligations they have severally assumed.

In so far as it affects the obligation concerned, a seal is to a written covenant what an oath is to a covenant expressed in words. That oaths and seals are of real value among men, in

securing the performance of promises and covenants, their universal use in all ages abundantly testifies.

The use of an oath—and the same is true of a seal, on the part of God—is set forth in Heb. vi. 17, 18: "Wherein, God willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath. That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." (See also 2 Tim. ii. 19.) God confirms his promise by an oath, and his covenant by a seal, not on account of any necessity for such confirmation in his own nature, but for our sakes.

This, then, is the use of a seal to a covenant between God and man: to bind man with greater solemnity to the discharge of the obligations of that covenant, in so far as they are his; and to assure man of the discharge of those obligations in so far as they are God's.

The covenant into which God entered with Abraham, of which circumcision was the seal under the Old Testament dispensation, as baptism is under the New, is on record in Gen. xvii. 4–8. As has been already remarked, this covenant embraces three several particulars.

1. A promise of the land of Canaan, and of special blessing to Abraham's natural descendants, v. 8. In this promise, and circumcision as the seal of it, the Jew alone is interested. With it we Gentiles have nothing to do.

2. In the words, "And thou shalt be a father of many nations: for a father of many nations I have made thee," vs. 4, 5, God bound himself to Abraham, and to the church through Abraham, its federal representative, that the Gentiles (the "*many nations*") should be brought into that church. (See Rom. iv. 9–17.) And the church, through Abraham, bound itself to all that service of God, which by divine appointment was to be blessed in securing this result. In fulfilment of this obligation on the part of the church, the apostles and others selected by God for the work, in their day, preached the gospel in all parts of the then known world. In fulfilment of the obligation on the part of God, the Spirit was abundantly poured forth, and the labors of the church of God blessed to the establishment of that church in Gentile lands, among "many nations." The cove-

nant obligations herein implied, are as yet but partially fulfilled, and baptism, as a sacrament of the church, is this day a witness to that church, at once, of her obligation to "disciple all nations," and of God's obligation to "be with her," in this her labor of love, "always, even to the end of the world."

You will now see a beautiful propriety in the direction which our Lord gives to his apostles to *baptize* the Gentile converts, when he commissions them to "go into all the world and preach his gospel to every creature," Mark xvi. 15, 16. Their labors, and God's blessing which rendered those labors effectual, were in fulfilment of covenant obligations; and he would fix their eyes upon the seal of that covenant, that they might feel more solemnly their obligations to labor, and that their faith might be strengthened so as to enable them to labor in the exercise of a cheerful alacrity.

3. The covenant embraces a third particular, different in this respect from the other two, that it is of individual application: "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and thy seed after thee," v. 8. And it is in this third particular alone we need to study the covenant, in order to understand the nature of baptism, considered as a sacrament of individual application.

That the seed of Abraham, with whom God here promises to "establish his covenant in their generations for an everlasting covenant," is not the natural seed of Abraham, but such as through faith should become his seed, is most clearly taught us in Holy Scripture. "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise," Gal. iii. 29. "They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted for the seed," Rom. ix. 8.

In this third particular, the covenant obligations are expressed in the two phrases—"I will be a God to thee," and I will be a God "to thy seed after thee"—the first having especial reference to adult baptism; to baptism where the obligations are assumed by a person on his own behalf; the second, to infant baptism, to baptism where the obligations are assumed by a parent acting for his child. And, before proceeding to inquire more particularly into the meaning of these expressions, I would

ask you here to notice, that not only in the same covenant, but in the very same sentence of that covenant, in which God binds himself to the Christian to be his God, he binds himself to be a God to his seed after him; or, viewing the matter with reference to the covenant obligations on the part of the Christian, in the very same sentence in which he is directed to take the God of Abraham to be his God, he is directed to take him to be the God of his seed after him. So indissolubly has God connected these two things together in his gracious covenant, and specifically directed that the seal of that covenant be applied alike to both, Gen. xvii. 12, and 26, 27. And what God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

In order that we may understand the nature of the personal obligations embraced in this covenant, let us carefully examine the terms of the covenant in which these personal obligations are expressed.

1. What is meant by God's becoming *the God* of a person, and by a person's choosing the God of Abraham to be *his God?*

In Deut. xxvi. 17, we read, "Thou hast avouched (i. e. solemnly taken) the Lord this day to be *thy God*, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice."

In Isaiah xliii. 1–3, we read, "Fear not, for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the water, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee; for I am the Lord *thy God*, the holy one of Israel, thy Saviour."

On the authority of the use of the terms of the covenant in these passages, and I might multiply similar quotations, did it seem necessary, I say: That for a person to choose the God of Abraham to be his God, is to bind himself "to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice;" and in God's covenanting to be the God of such a person, God binds himself to be "his Redeemer," and that when he "passes through the waters he will be with him; and that when he walks through the fire he shall not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon him." Such is the covenant between the

God of Abraham and a believer, as expressed in the words, "I will be a God to thee." And this part of the covenant, which alone is personal to an adult, embodies the privileges and duties to which the seal had added assurance, when applied to an adult on his own behalf, in every age of the church since that seal was first given. Hence, under the Christian dispensation, baptism cannot be administered to such a person, excepting upon a credible profession of his faith in Christ. Now that God has clearly ascertained to us that Jesus is the Christ, no one can honestly enter into covenant with him, "to hearken unto his voice," who is not prepared to make the confession of faith which Philip required of the Ethiopian eunuch ere he baptized him, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God." (Acts viii. 37).

2d. What is meant by a person's choosing his God, to be "the God of his seed after him;" and by God's becoming, in consequence of this choice of the parent, "the God of his seed after him?"

God says of Abraham, with whom this covenant was first entered into, "I know Abraham, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the ways of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him." (Gen. xviii. 19.) God says of Eli, when about to punish him for his disobedience, "Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. In that day I will perform against Eli, all the things which I have spoken concerning his house; when I begin, I will also make an end. For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever, for the iniquity which he knoweth, because his sons made themselves vile and he restrained them not; and therefore, I have sworn unto Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifices nor offerings for ever." (1 Sam. iii. 11–14.)

In these two passages of Scripture, we have illustrations of what God has decided to be obedience to the obligations expressed in taking our God to be "the God of our seed after us," by his promises to bless; and of disobedience to these obligations, by his threatening to punish: and, applying the well known rule of interpretation, that "the greater includes the less,"

we say that we have authority from the word of God for saying, that a parent, in taking his God to be "the God of his seed after him," comes under all the obligations implied in the promise which he is required to make in presenting his child for baptism in the Presbyterian church, viz:—"That he will teach the child to read the word of God; that he will instruct it in the principles of our holy religion, as contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament; that he will pray with it and for it; that he will set before it an example of piety and godliness, and will endeavor by all the means of God's appointment, to bring up the child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." (Directory for Worship, chap. vii.)

In these same passages of Scripture, we are distinctly taught, that the obligation under which God comes, when by his own direction he is chosen by the pious parent as "the God of his seed after him," is not an obligation to bless the child, irrespective of the fulfilment of covenant obligations on the part of the parent. In his address to Abraham, God suspends the bestowment of the promised blessing upon Abraham's "*commanding* his children and his household after him, that they should keep the ways of the Lord." And Eli's children, because "he restrained them not, when they made themselves vile," grew up "sons of Belial, that knew not the Lord," and in the prime of manhood, were cut off in the very act of an idolatrous substitution of the Ark of God in the place of the God of Israel. The doctrine that baptism exerts any direct regenerating influence upon the soul of the baptized infant, is a doctrine as much at variance with the word of God as it is with common observation. The water of baptism can no more remove the stain of sin from the soul of an infant, than "the blood of bulls and goats" can, from the soul of an adult. Baptism, as presented in the word of God, and in the "Confession of Faith," is no mystic charm, but a solemn sacrament.

God entered into covenant with Abraham to be a God unto his "natural seed after him;" and in their history we have an illustration of what is meant by God's becoming "the God of our seed after us." In fulfilment of his covenant engagements, God bore long with the natural seed of Abraham his servant—often staying his judgments, which in the ordinary course of his providence would have been inflicted upon them; raised

up for them deliverers in their times of trouble and captivity; sent them prophets to instruct, to exhort, to warn them; held himself ever ready to forgive their sins and bless them, as a God easy to be entreated; and even when their rebellion, continued through successive generations, had resulted in that crowning act of impious madness, the crucifixion of the Lord of Glory, he directed that salvation in the name of that crucified one "should be preached among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem," Luke xxiv. 47. The spirit which marked the dealings of God with these children of the covenant, in all their continued rebellion, is that expressed in the touching words: "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? My heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." Hosea xi. 8. That God thus dealt with Israel in fulfilment of his covenant with Abraham, we are distinctly taught in Ps. cv and cvi.

On the authority of God's word then, we believe not only that, in the obligations laid upon the parent, God has provided for the baptized child, instruction in the truths of our holy religion, the enjoyment of all the ordinary means of grace, and fervent prayer such as is not offered for the child of the stranger, but also, that he has himself come under covenant obligations, and our God is "a covenant-keeping God," to bear with such children as he does not with others, to deal with them as "a long-suffering God," easy to be entreated, ready to forgive, to keep their consciences alive to the truth, and by his Spirit to strive with them as he does not with others. And for the truth of all this, I appeal, first, to the word of God; and, then, to the experience of the baptized children of pious parents here before me. All this does not necessarily secure the salvation of such an one: he may yet be lost; but he can never die as the child of "the heathen man and the publican."

For this doctrine of God's word, in so far as it concerns natural agencies, there is a foundation laid, deep and broad, in the original constitution of man's nature.

That God has placed the child, during the years of infancy and early youth, under the control of the parent, is a truth which no reflecting person will call in question. So obviously is it a truth, that no civil government, worthy the name of a

government, has ever existed among men which has not acknowledged and protected this right of the parent; and even enforced its exercise on the part of the parent by penal sanctions, by holding the parent responsible, to a greater or less extent, for the conduct of the child. Were this true of Christian governments alone, it might be urged with some show of reason, that the idea had been derived originally from the Bible; this, however, is not the case. The government of heathen Rome carried this matter further than any Christian government now does; giving to the parent an absolute control over the liberty and even the life of the child.

In that strong mutual affection which God has implanted in the hearts of the parent and the child, he has made provision for the exercise of this control on the part of the parent, and for corresponding obedience on the part of the child. There are, it is true, monsters in human form, devoid of this affection; and heathenism, where in its most debasing forms it has had sway from generation to generation, has succeeded in partially obliterating it; but for the honor of our humanity be it spoken, these cases must be considered exceptions to the general rule. Where the human affections have had a healthy development, there is none more deeply rooted or of stronger growth than that which a parent feels for a child; and often, when the whole heart has been desolated by the fires of some unholy passion, by avarice for example, you will yet see this affection remaining, like the tall, naked, blackened trunk of the old oak remains, where the fire in the forest has swept away before it every other trace of the glory with which God once clothed that forest land.

This influence which God has thus evidently put into the hands of the parent, is in its very nature an influence which must control, to a very great extent, the formation of the character of the child, and especially the religious character of the child.

Practical religion has its seat in the affections; and hence, a man, if perfect in holiness, would evince that perfection by "loving the Lord his God, with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his mind; and loving his neighbor as himself." Parental control, as we have seen, has also its seat in the affections: and is not the inference a sound one, that

God has placed these two fountains in such immediate neighborhood, that "the sweet waters" of the one, mingling with "the healing waters" of the other, they might together form a stream which "should made glad the garden of the Lord?"

Or taking a different view of practical religion, as something to be wrought in man by the mighty power of God; that power, according to the acknowledged principles of God's government, is in all ordinary instances to be put forth in answer to prayer. Now prayer, fervent, effectual prayer, must spring from the heart, must be, in fact, but the expression of an emotion which fills the heart. Hence, as none can feel for a child a love pure and deep and abiding as that which the parent feels, none can pray for that child with the fervency and the importunity with which the praying parent can. Thus are we again led to the same conclusion; that God intends parental influence to be exercised in determining the religious character of the child. Away then with the infidel notion, that the parent should not attempt to influence the religious character of the child, but suffer him to grow up free from all bias, that in manhood he may choose for himself! a doctrine, not more directly in opposition to the word of God than it is shallow in its philosophy. To free the child, as a religious being, from parental influence, would require a change in human nature which would sink both parent and child in the scale of being beneath the brute, that by instinct loves its young and is loved by it in return.

In the original constitution of man's nature, and in the very depths of the human heart, has God thus laid the foundations of his precious covenant, "I will be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee," of which baptism gives the assurance of a seal to his church at this day, as circumcision did in the days of Abraham.

Having now set before you the nature of infant baptism, let me present you an argument for its divine origin resting upon that nature. In questions of duty the word of God teaches us, where the mind is left in some doubt, to let the heart under the supervision of conscience decide the question. In that purblind condition to which sin has brought us, where we cannot clearly see our way we may often feel it.

According to the view of the nature of infant baptism pre-

sented, that sacrament has been instituted in the church of God, to consecrate to his service the strongest and most abiding affection of the human heart; the affection which the parent feels for the child. How often do we see this affection, even in its natural exercise, prove stronger than the love of reputation, aye, than the love of life itself? How often has it led the parent, when a profligate son has by his crimes condemned himself to infamy, to cling to him even in his dungeon, or to watch by him as he is dying of malignant disease, to bathe his burning brow and close his sightless eyes, when all others terror-stricken have fled? Speak I not the language of truth, when I add, this affection is not only the strongest and most abiding but the purest of the natural affections; the greenest spot in the wide waste of humanity which the desolating curse has left; the purest gold, which lies mingled with the passions, worldly, sensual, and devilish, with which sin has filled the human heart: and will it seem a strange thing that the "Spirit like a dove" descending, shall rest longest upon this green spot in the parched desert, that the "sun of righteousness" shall distinguish this fine gold from the baser material with which it lies mingled, by giving it something of his own glory in his reflected beams? Would it not rather seem strange were it not so?

Or look at the spirit of Christianity, as it is exhibited in the only perfect example of Christian character which earth has ever witnessed—the example of the Lord Jesus. On one occasion we read that he was much displeased with his disciples; a remarkable record this, respecting one whose patience was exhibited to Isaiah's prophet vision by the symbol of a lamb that opened not its mouth. The occasion of our Lord's displeasure is clearly set forth in the record—"And they brought young children to him that he should touch them; and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was *much displeased*, and said, suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God." (Mark x. 13, 14.) If such be the true spirit of Christianity, can we repress the thought—how strangely like it, the spirit which breathes through the sacrament of infant baptism? For myself, I can say, that infant baptism forms so homogeneous a part of Christianity that I cannot but trace all

alike to the same divine author; it meets, and so fully satisfies the yearnings of the Christian parent's heart, that practical Christianity seems incomplete without it; it touches a chord strung to such perfect harmony with the harp of God, that it cannot but be meant for the service of the sanctuary.

In order to a more complete presentation of the nature of infant baptism, let me apply the truths which have been ascertained to the answer of certain practical questions respecting this sacrament. And I shall answer such questions, and such only, as in the course of my ministry have been proposed to me by persons desirous to know the truth.

1. Is the Christian master bound to have the children of his slaves baptized, as was Abraham those born in his house?

Viewing this question as a practical question, having reference to slavery as it exists among us, I answer, No. We must not suffer ourselves to be imposed upon by a mere similarity of terms. Slavery as it exists among us, does not effect that entire substitution of magisterial for parental influence, which it did as it existed among the Jews and in the days of Abraham. Among us, the slave parent has, in most instances, as entire control over the formation of the religious character of his child as the free parent among the laboring classes in other parts of the country. In God's providence this control may be, and sometimes is thrown into the hands of the master, and where this is the case I would give a different answer. Where God places a Christian master in the relation to others which Abraham sustained to those "bought with his money or borne in his house," Abraham's obligations rest upon him, and Abraham's privileges are his.

2. May a Presbyterian minister administer baptism to the children of the members of other branches of the church of Christ?

I answer, He may. Baptism was instituted by God, as a seal of his covenant with Abraham, and all those who, through Christ, are accounted the "seed of Abraham," have a right to a part in covenant privileges both for themselves and their children. Neither Baptism nor the Lord's Supper have anything to do with Presbyterianism, as such; they are the divinely instituted sacraments of the church of God, and all who belong to that church have a right to participate in their blessings.

3. May godfathers and godmothers be permitted to take the place of parents in the baptism of an infant?

I answer, No. The god-parents, in assuming the place of the parents in the administration of this sacrament, thrust themselves unbidden into the places which God has assigned to others, and presume to take, in behalf of the child, responsibilities which God never has, and man never can authorize them to take. "Whatever tends to beget erroneous ideas of the nature and design of a Gospel ordinance, to shift off the responsibility attending it from the proper to improper hands, and to the assumption of solemn engagements by those who can never really fulfil them, and have no intention of doing it, cannot fail of exerting an influence unfriendly to the best interests of the church of God."—(Dr. Miller.)

"Sponsors" are mentioned by the early fathers of the church; but, by sponsors, they meant guardians, who, after the death of the parents, assumed towards the child the relation of parents; or who, by legal adoption of a child, had come to occupy the place of parents. Sponsors, understanding the term in this sense, may properly be admitted in the place of parents now. When either by a dispensation of God's providence, or by authority of civil government, "ordained of God," any person comes to stand in the place of a parent, all the obligations of the parent become his, and the privileges of the parent go along with the obligations.

4. Ought baptism to be administered to an infant where neither of the parents are believers?

I answer, No. Some who have not carefully studied the nature of this sacrament, or who, having studied it, entertain different views of its nature from those presented in our Confession of Faith as the doctrine of the word of God, may answer this question differently. The terms of the covenant are, I will "be a God unto *thee*, and to *thy seed after thee*," Gen. xvii. 7. The covenant is first with the parent on his own behalf, and then with that parent on behalf of his seed; and where God has established this order and this connexion man has no right to set it aside.

In view of the exposition of the nature of this covenant already given, I say, not only that baptism ought not to be administered in the case under examination, but a baptism valid

in securing covenant blessings to the child, cannot be administered by mortal man. God has made no man, be he bishop, priest, or pastor, the dispenser of sacramental grace. A minister may sprinkle an infant with water, calling over it the name of the blessed Trinity: this is but the outward form, and not the substance of baptism. Unless there come from the parent's heart the dedication, the covenant vow, "God of Abraham, I take thee to be my God, and the God of my seed after me," all that is done in administering the outward form is to affix God's seal to a blank, in so far as the child is concerned, and to lay upon the parent's conscience the weight of a broken vow. Baptism is no mystic charm; and God forbid that we should degrade a solemn sacrament into a mere ecclesiastical contrivance for attaching a name to a child.

5. Is it desirable that baptism should be administered to an infant where there is a near prospect of that infant's death?

I answer, Yes. It is desirable that it should be administered in such circumstances, not for the sake of the infant taken away, but for that of the parent who remains. The doctrine of infant salvation, as we hold it, rests not upon a belief in the innate purity of the child, for its very death is God's attestation to its inheritance of corruption, Rom. v. 12; but upon the belief that as the infant, through its connexion with the first Adam, stands in law condemned without any actual transgression on its part, through Christ, "the second Adam," it will stand in judgment acquitted without any actual exercise of faith on its part. It is through Christ, then, the one who dies in infancy is saved, as truly as the hoary-headed believer who goes to his grave full of years. Through Christ, the promised seed of Abraham, the infant inherits heaven, the spiritual Canaan; why then should we refuse it the seal of the covenant with Abraham, in which the gracious designs of God are certified to us?

Baptism, as has been already remarked, is never administered to compel God to discharge an obligation which he would otherwise neglect; but to assure the believing parent that God will perform his covenant obligations to the letter. The baptism of an infant, as we have seen, is also an act in which the parent acknowledges God's property in the child, in solemnly choosing God to be "the God of his seed after him." Now, it is by a firm grasp upon these two truths the bereaved parent must be

sustained in the hour of trial: it is from a reception of them into the heart by faith, that true Christian submission, or rather, I would say, Christian acquiescence in the dispensations of God's providence must spring. If God has given us a seal, designed to strengthen the Christian's faith, shall we refuse it in the hour when that faith is most sorely tried? If God has sent light from heaven, not to illumine the departing spirit—that is the office work of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter; not to guide the ascending spirit to its mansion in "our Father's house"—the "angels that do always behold the face of our Father in heaven" are God's messengers to minister to the heirs of salvation; but with its beams to give a mellow radiance to the green sod which covers the grave of infancy, shall man presume to shut it out?

In conclusion; bear with me whilst I address a few words to such of you, my hearers, as in times past have become parties to this solemn covenant, in which the believer takes the God of Abraham to be his God, and the God of his seed after him.

Believing parent, have your baptized children, as they have become old enough to choose for themselves, confirmed the choice of the God of their fathers to be their God, which in their years of infancy you made in their behalf? And if they have not, can you tell why they have not? Do you say, I have tried to teach them, but I have known so little of God's truth myself, that I fear my teaching has not greatly profited them; I have tried to set before them an example of piety and godliness, but my Christian life has been such a course of sinning and repenting—sinning and repenting—that their hearts have seemed to harden under its influence; I have tried to pray for them, and with them, but, alas! my too heartless prayers have not been heard; and now, my children, increasing in years, are yet aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the God of their fathers?

Do you ask, What shall I do? Go to your God, with whom you have covenanted; spread the whole case before him: confess to him your failures in discharge of duty, and seek forgiveness from Him who is ready to forgive "not seven times, but seventy times seven." Pray for grace and wisdom, that you may be faithful in time to come. And then plead with him the covenant; and if unbelief would drive you from the mercy-

seat by the remembrance of your past shortcomings, or would overwhelm you by the greatness of the work which must be wrought ere your unbelieving child can become a child of God, fix your eye upon the seal to that covenant: God gave it to you a sealed covenant for the very purpose that with faith strengthened by the sight of the seal, you might plead the promise in the name of him through whom the covenant with Abraham has become yours; and give not o'er, whilst in a land where a covenant-keeping God hears and answers prayer. I once quitted the death-bed of a pious mother in company with her baptized child, who had been for years an infidel, when he turned to me and said: "The Bible is true; I can be an infidel no longer." And the conviction then and there awakened, died not away until the covenant-keeping God of his mother had been publicly taken to be his God. Thus is it, sometimes, that the faithful example of a dying hour produces an impression which years of health have failed to make: the prayer which breaks from the lips fast stiffening in death, brings down the blessing which many prayers offered in other circumstances have not secured.

Baptized Child of believing parents; Child of the Covenant, the vows of God are upon you. Say not, "they were not taken by me, and therefore cannot bind me." They were taken by one to whom God gave a right to bind you, and this day God holds you bound by those vows. They are vows made under the same claim of right which cherished your helpless infancy; the same claim of right under which you received the watchful care which alleviated your sufferings in your hours of sickness, the sympathy which gladdened your hours of rejoicing; the same claim of right under which your head was long sheltered from the winter's storm, and shielded from the burning ray of the summer's sun; a claim of right which even the wiser heathen dare not question, and to which God has certified by his handwriting upon the fleshly tables of your heart.

The vows of God are upon you: you have been sealed with the seal of his covenant. That seal can never be destroyed. It will not rot amid the damps of the grave; through the flames which with their fervent heat shall burn up the earth, it will pass untouched; and as you stand in the presence of the judge of quick and dead, the light of the resurrection will reveal that

seal in all its original distinctness upon your brow. Shall it appear then and there, the seal of a covenant fulfilled, a witness to your participation in the faith of Abraham, of your union with Christ, the promised seed of Abraham? Or shall it appear as the seal of a broken vow? If as the seal of a broken vow, it will bear testimony against you, and it will bear true testimony. It will bear testimony on behalf of your believing parents, to instruction given you, to Christian example set before you, to prayers offered for you, and with you, as in the house of God that seal was applied in early infancy; as in the retirement of your childhood's home, you were taught to repeat the words, "Our Father;" as in the years of your youth you were night and morning taught to kneel around the family altar. And it will bear testimony too, to many a prayer offered for you where none but God could hear it: perhaps the last prayer which a pious parent offered, when as Heaven's pilgrim he stood with his feet wet with the "swellings of Jordan," a prayer but half uttered when his lips took up the song of triumph. It will bear testimony on behalf of your parent's God, a covenant-keeping God, to warnings given you by his providence and by conscience; to a long-suffering forbearance towards you, such as will prove him to have been to you a God easy to be entreated, ready to forgive; to invitations, entreaties, admonitions given by his word, and his ministers speaking in his name; to the strivings of his Spirit with you, that Spirit which so often strove and was so oft resisted. And as all this damning testimony falls upon your ear, your mouth will be stopped, and, conscience-stricken, you will stand guilty before God. Child of the covenant! you cannot die as the child of the heathen-man and the publican: the doom of your lost soul, if that soul be lost, must be the doom of one "exalted unto heaven," to be "thrust down to hell." Oh! that forewarned, ye would turn now, even to-day, to that God whose ye are, and whom ye are bound to serve.